



Tomah Area School District

If You Believe, You Will Achieve

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To: Senate Education Committee Members

From: Cindy Zahrte
District Administrator
Tomah Area School District

Re: Public Hearing on Senate Bill 619

I am presenting this statement in opposition to Senate Bill 619 which would allow the state legislature to become involved in the development of educational standards in the state of Wisconsin. The Tomah Area School District dedicated the majority of our professional development time during the 2012-13 school year to preparation for full implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in English/Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics this school year. These college and career readiness standards are grade level specific and far more rigorous than the Wisconsin Model Academic Standards previously in place. These standards incorporate 21st century skills and have an emphasis on disciplinary literacy, where all teachers are ELA teachers within their respective content area. We are already seeing increased achievement by our students from having higher expectations for them.

The system which has been developed to support the CCSS in Wisconsin is the most comprehensive and organized reform movement I have seen in my 30+ years as an educator. The Smarter Balanced Assessment System is aligned with the CCSS and measures student learning based on those standards. The Educator Effectiveness System has been designed to promote professional growth and reflective practice based on the Danielson Model. These additional components, the assessment piece and the reflective practitioner piece, ensure that the CCSS are being implemented with fidelity. It is a complete package and there is no question that Wisconsin children will receive quality instruction with all these pieces in place.

A great deal of time, effort, and financial resources have been invested in implementing and supporting the CCSS. We estimate that we have spent close to \$400,000 on resources and professional development related to implementation of the CCSS. The CCSS focus on fewer standards for mastery with a far deeper level of understanding for students. They clearly provide districts with a solid road map for curriculum development while still allowing teachers professional flexibility in determining the best methods for instruction. To start again, developing new standards and then creating corresponding instructional lessons and locating resources is extremely wasteful and unproductive. This will move our state educational system backward at a time when we need increased achievement for our children to remain competitive in our global economy. The Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce (WMC), the state's largest business group, stands in support of Common Core along with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce!

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Volk Field, a full service military readiness training complex, and Camp Williams, which is operated by the Army National Guard, are located south of Tomah, while Fort McCoy, a US Army base is to our west. Students attend our schools whose parents have been transferred to these military bases from other installations around the country. “Most military children will move at least twice during their high school years and will attend six to nine different schools between kindergarten and 12th grade,” according to the National Military Family Association. Having the CCSS in place across the country in forty-five (45) states provides our military families, who sacrifice so much already by having a parent who is serving our country, with greater consistency in their education and a much greater opportunity for success. The United States Military supports Common Core!

While I do respect the knowledge and skills our state legislators possess and the important role you play in developing laws, can you honestly believe or say that elimination of the Common Core and legislative involvement in creating or changing state educational standards is good statewide policy? We have a Department of Public Instruction created by our state constitution that has been charged with this task. Article X, Section 1 of the Wisconsin Constitution, provides that the supervision of public instruction be vested in the state superintendent. Senate Bill 619, in essence, would change supervision of public instruction to the Legislature. Such involvement will only politicize educational standards. Our children should not be subject to the whims and fancies of whatever political party is in power. Our children deserve to have our legislators support our State Superintendent of Schools and respect the efforts of the Department of Public Instruction whose endless work is to ensure that **every** child- rich or poor, gifted or disabled, Hispanic, Native American or white, rural or urban- graduates ready for further education and the workplace.

As a representative for the Tomah Area School District, we are in **full support of the Common Core** State Standards for Wisconsin and in **strong opposition to Senate Bill 619**.